

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3796

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

GOV PAN CANAL

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 2635

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PN PQ

SUBJ: TACK'S TRAVELS AND COMMENTS

REFS (A) PANAMA 2515 (B) PANAMA 2417 (C) PANAMA 2155

SUMMARY: IN THE GOP'S CONTINUING LATIN AMERICAN
DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE, FOREIGN MINISTER TACK VISITED BUENOS
AIRES (MAY 1-2), MONTEVIDEO (MAY 3), AND LIMA (MAY 5).
MINISTRY ADVISER ILLUECA, SEPARATELY VISITED
ASUNCION MAY 3 AND REPORTEDLY WILL VISIT LA PAZ AND
SANTIAGO. OF TACK'S STATEMENTS REPORTED BY PRESS CONCERNING
CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, MOST SIGNIFICANT WERE ASSERTIONS
THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE AT AN IMPASSE, THAT PANAMA WILL
TAKE CANAL ISSUE TO UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY IF NEGOTIATING
PROGRESS IS NOT SATISFACTORY, THAT QUESTIONS OF DURATION
AND U.S. MILITARY BASES ARE TWO PRINCIPAL UNRESOLVED
TREATY ISSUES, AND THAT THE CANAL PROBLEM WILL BE RAISED AT
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OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. CLEARLY DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN LATIN

SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S POSITION IN THE NEGOTIATION, TACK'S CURRENT TRIP IS PART OF THE MISSION THAT HAS RECENTLY TAKEN HIM TO BRAZIL, COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA. AS THAT MISSION HAS EVOLVED, ITS SECOND PURPOSE -- TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR A MAJOR DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE SHOULD THE TALKS BREAK DOWN -- IS EMERGING MORE SHARPLY IN TACK'S PUBLIC COMMENTS. END SUMMARY

1. CONTINUING THE GOP'S CURRENT LATIN AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE, FOREIGN MINISTER JUAN ANTONION TACK VISITED ARGENTINA (MAY 1-2), URUGUAY (MAY 3) AND PERU (MAY 4-5). ACCORDING TO PRESS, TACK MET WITH HIS COUNTERPARTS, FOREIGN MINISTERS VIGNES AND BLANCO, IN BUENOS AIRES AND MONTEVIDEO, WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT MARIA ESTELA MARTINEZ DE PERON, AND DELIVERED PERSONAL LETTERS TO CHIEFS OF STATE FROM GENERAL TORRIJOS. FOREIGN MINISTRY POLITICAL ADVISER JORGE ILLUECA, TRAVELLING WITH TACK, MADE A SEPARATE STOP IN ASUNCION MAY 3 FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SAPENA PASTOR AND TO DELIVER SIMILAR TORRIJOS LETTER TO PRESIDENT STROESSNER. ACCORDING TO PRESS, ILLUECA WILL ALSO VISIT LA PAZ AND SANTIAGO.

2. IN A BUENOS AIRES PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING MEETING WITH VIGNES, TACK IS REPORTED TO HAVE STATED THAT ARGENTINA "UNCONDITIONALLY" SUPPORTED PANAMA'S CANAL POSITION. HE REPORTEDLY DESCRIBED PANAMA'S MOST IMMEDIATE GOAL AS RETURN TO CANAL TERRITORY TO PANAMA-MAIAN JURISDICTION, AND AS A SECONDARY AIM, THAT THE CANAL BE PANAMANIAN. CONCERNING THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, TACK (ACCORDING TO AP ACCOUNT) WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE TALKS ARE "IN A DIFFICULT STAGE," AND WHILE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN SOME KEY AREAS, IMPORTANT ISSUES -- DURATION AND THE QUESTION OF U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS -- REMAIN UNRESOLVED. TACK REPORTEDLY REMARKED THAT THE U.S. REQUESTS A HALF CENTURY, WHEREAS PANAMA SAYS NEW TREATY CANNOT EXTEND BEYOND THIS CENTURY. OTHER WIRE SERVICES CITED HIM AS SAYING THE NEGOTIATIONS HAD REACHED AN "IMPASSE" (EFE AND PL) OR "THERE IS NO PROGRESS" ON TWO ISSUES (UPI). WITH REGARD TO U.S. MILITARY BASES, THE FOREIGN

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MINISTER REPORTEDLY STATED THAT THEY ARE "UNNECESSARY FOR DEFENSE PURPOSES" AND THAT PANAMA AND "ALL LATIN AMERICA" REPUDIATE THEM. TACK ADDED THAT "WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE BASES CANNOT BE ELIMINATED OVERNIGHT" AND REMARKED THAT PANAMA IS DISPOSED TO ELIMINATE THEM "IN STAGES" BUT THAT IT MUST BE DONE WITH "THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD IN THE DEFENSE AND PROTECTION OF THE CANAL." CHARACTERIZING THE CANAL ZONE AS A

"TYPICAL CASE OF COLONIALISM WHICH VIOLATES THE UN CHARTER. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ASSERTED THAT "ALL LATIN AMERICA WISHES FOR AN END TO THIS SITUATION INCONCEIVABLE IN THE 20TH CENTURY." OBSERVING THAT "SOME PROGRESSIVE NORTH AMERICANS, SUCH AS SENATOR KENNEDY, AGREE WITH THE PANAMANIAN BASES POSITION," TACK STATED THAT FORT GULICK (SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS) IS USED FOR ANTI-GUERRILLA TRAINING" FOR POLITICAL REASONS NOT LINKED TO THE DEFENSE OF THE CANAL." REFERRING TO THE PACE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, THE FOREIGN MINISTER REPORTEDLY ASSERTED THAT IF PROGRESS WERE NOT SATISFACTORY, PANAMA WOULD TAKE ITS CASE TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN SEPTEMBER. AS FOR CANAL ISSUE AT OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AP REPORTED TACK AS SAYING THAT IT WOULD SURELY BE DEBATED, ALTHOUGH THE QUESTION WOULD NOT BE INTRODUCED BY PANAMA.

3. PRENSA LATINA AND AGENCE FRANCE PRESS REPORTS HAD TACK ASSERTING THAT PANAMA WOULD RAISE CANAL ISSUE AT OAS AND AS OBSERVING THAT IF THE CURRENT TREATY NEGOTIATIONS ARE DELAYED, THE FAULT IS WITH THE US, NOT PANAMA, AS PANAMA IS AWAITING A REPLY TO ITS PROPOSALS. IN ITS ACCOUNT, EFE WIRE SERVICE REPORTED THAT TACK MAINTAINED THAT IF PANAMA'S EFFORTS, AND LATIN AMERICAN SUPPORT AT THE OAS, DID NOT ACHIEVE THE GOP'S DESIRED SOLUTION, PANAMA WOULD SUBMIT THE CANAL QUESTION TO THE UN FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE "DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE." FOR ITS PART, RADIO LIBERTAD STATED THAT VIGNES HAD EXPRESSED HIS SUPPORT" IN PRINCIPLE "FOR A RESOLUTION, THAT "COULD BE" ADOPTED AT THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SUPPORTING PANAMA AND CALLING ON THE U.S. TO ACCELERATE THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE RADIO LIBERTAD REPORT ALSO INDICATED THAT TACK HAD BEEN INTERVIEWED SEVERAL TIMES, A FACT WHICH APPARENTLY EXPLAINS THE DIFFERING PRESS ACCOUNTS OF WHAT TACK REPORTEDLY SAID IN BUENOS AIRES.

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4. TACK, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, WAS LESS TALKATIVE IN MONTEVIDEO. ACCORDING TO AP REPORT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD NEWSMEN THAT PANAMA HAD RECEIVED SUPPORT FOR ITS CANAL POSITION" FROM ALL COUNTRIES IN THE HEMISPHERE." WITH RESPECT TO PANAMA'S POSITION, TACK IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT IN ADDITION TO AN ENTIRELY NEW TREATY THAT WOULD MAKE THE CANAL "WHOLLY AND TOTALLY PANAMANIAN," THE GOP "ALSO DEMANDS THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE 14 MILITARY BASES WHICH THE U.S. KEEPS IN OUR COUNTRY." AS FOR ILLUECA'S MISSION TO PARAGUAY, THE AP REPORTED THAT ILLUECA "CONFIRMED" THAT PANAMA WILL SEEK A RESOLUTION AT THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY CALLING FOR "THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION" OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3797

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ 1541

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

GOV PAN CANAL

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 2635

5. IN THE FIRST EDITORIAL COMMENT ON TACK'S LATEST STATEMENTS, THE GOP-CONTROLLED CRITICA MAY 5 FOCUSED ON REFERENCES TO TWO PRINCIPAL REMAINING HURDLES IN THE NEGOTIATIONS (DURATION AND MILITARY BASES), OAS CONSIDERATION OF THE CANAL ISSUE, AND TACK'S ASSERTION THAT PANAMA WILL TAKE THE QUESTION TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY IF PROGRESS IS NOT FORTHCOMING. STATING THAT PANAMA WOULD ACCEPT NEITHER "DISGUISED PERPETUITY" OR A U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE THAT CONSTITUTES A THREAT TO PANAMA AND LATIN AMERICA, THE EDITORIAL STRONGLY ENDORSED THE UN ROUTE. ALTHOUGH THE CANAL ISSUE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE RAISED AT THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ACCORDING TO CRITICA, U.S. DOMINANCE RENDERS THAT ORGANIZATION INADEQUATE FOR THE SOLUTION THAT PANAMA SEEKS. AT THE UN, IF CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE IT, PANAMA CAN FIGHT WITH THE SUPPORT OF AN ANTI-COLONIALIST MAJORITY.

6. COMMENT: TACK'S LATEST TRIP, A CONTINUATION OF THE
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DIPLOMATIC MISSION THAT HAS RECENTLY TAKEN HIM TO BRAZIL, COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA, IS PART OF A GOP CAMPAIGN TO STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR ITS CANAL POSITION AND TO PREPARE THE STAGE FOR A VIGOROUS INTERNATIONAL OFFENSIVE SHOULD THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS COLLAPSE. WHILE THE DIFFERENT WIRE SERVICES GAVE SOMEWHAT VARYING ACCOUNTS OF TACK'S VARIOUS STATEMENTS IN THE THREE CAPITALS -- HE MET WITH NEWSMEN THREE TIMES IN BUENOS AIRES - IT IS NEVERTHELESS CLEAR HIS LANGUAGE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY STRONG. HIS PRINCIPAL MESSAGE HAS BEEN TO SIGNAL SOME PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS BUT TO INFORM HIS AUDIENCE THAT BLAME FOR DELAY RESTS WITH U.S. AND THAT A BREAK-DOWN IN THE TALKS WOULD PROVOKE A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL REACTION. THE GOP IS STILL FOLLOWING THE PATH OF NEGOTIATION BUT IT IS CLEARLY LAYING GROUNDWORK IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION FOR POLITICAL AND PROPAGANDA BATTLE IN THE EVENT OF A PROLONGED STALEMATE.

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